

Montana House of Representatives, Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committee, Organizational Committee Meeting – Thursday, January 10th, 3:00 pm in Room 152

Good afternoon members of the House Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present public comment.

My name is Jonathan Matthews and I'm testifying as a non-paid citizen volunteer on behalf of the Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club and our 2000 members in Montana.

I'd like to begin by stating that the Sierra Club supports well-regulated, fair chase hunting and fishing. Many of our members hunt and fish in Montana. However, the Sierra Club opposes the use of body-gripping devices – including leg-hold traps, snares, and Conibear traps, and the Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club supports a ban on recreational trapping on public lands.

We urge this committee to oppose HB 31. Wolves are a valued and important species. They are important to naturally functioning ecosystems, a value to the tourism industry, and to our way of life in Montana, where we pride ourselves on having more intact wildlife than any of the other contiguous states. Wolves should be managed like other native wildlife — to ensure their long-term viability.

We commend the Montana FWP Commissioners for setting wolf hunting closures in certain areas around Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. However, this bill would prevent Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks from making these sound management decisions for wolves in the future.

Use of Wolf Management Units with quotas is vital to Montana's wolf management. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks must retain this authority in order to properly manage wolves throughout Montana. Setting an arbitrary cap of 250 wolves in Montana is not based on sound science and contradicts Montana's Citizen-Stakeholder Wolf Management Plan.

We do not consider electronic calls for wolf hunting ethical or fair chase.

Finally, wildlife management decisions should be left up to biologists, not lawmakers. H.B. 31 risks the future of wolves in the northern Rockies and we therefore oppose this bill and encourage committee members to do so.

For the record, we also urge the committee to oppose HB 73 which would take wolf management in a very similar direction.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present public comment.

On behalf of the Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club,

Jonathan Matthews
1633 Flowerree St.
Helena, Montana 50691-5903